1: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1860) 1891
MA11 Kurd MA11



standing the inconvenience of this head-gear, and the 291
baldness which it causes, it is said to be worn even at night, little pillows being used to support it.

The dress of the peasant women is similar in form, but is invariably made of blue cotton stuffs; the *ferkeddûn*, or cloak, is of a darker shade of blue, with white stripes round the bottom, the corners being knotted across the breast or shoulder; and a small cap is worn on the head, the hair curling about the face.

Though nominally Moslems, the Kûrdish women 291
do not veil themselves very strictly when abroad. In 562
large towns like Suliemanieh the ladies wear a blue checked sheet, and a screen of black horsehair, like the Turkish women of the interior. This is, however, seldom pulled down, except by ladies of the highest rank, who may wish to pass through the streets *incognito;* and the lower class women generally go about with their faces uncovered. The village women veil themselves when they leave their homes; and the nomads, when on the march, partially screen their faces with a cotton kerchief or scarf. Menservants [398
are not, as with the Turks, excluded from the rooms 379]
occupied by the ladies of the house, and male visitors are freely received by the assembled family.

Notwithstanding, however, this apparent freedom 181
of manners, Kûrdish women conduct themselves with 562
the utmost dignity and propriety, displaying neither the timidity common to the Armenians, nor the forwardness too often seen in the behaviour of the Osmanlis. Their standard of morality is, indeed, 434
exceptionally high among the races of the country,

1: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
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any lapse from virtue on the part of a married woman being, as a rule, summarily punished by the injured husband with death; and her partner in guilt usually shares the same fate. No social odium attaches to the man who thus takes the law into his own hand; on the contrary, such an action is considered highly meritorious. Various stories are current among the Kûrds illustrating such retributory vengeance. One relates how a Kûrd, the captain of some irregular troops employed at Bagdad, hearing of his Kourmandji wife's suspected unfaithfulness during his absence, returned secretly to his native town, entered the house by night, and shot dead both her and her lover. Another of these stories describes the murder, by a boy of fifteen, of his stepmother and her partner in guilt during the absence of his father, whom a feud with a neighbouring chief had obliged to remove temporarily to a distance. In both these cases the deed was considered highly meritorious, and its perpetrator treated with every mark of consideration by friends and neighbours. The relatives of the guilty persons made no complaint to the authorities, nor did they manifest any resentment. On the contrary, the crime which had occasioned the murder is so abhorrent to the Kûrdish mind, that the customary visits of condolence were not paid to the families of the dead.

Stories, too, are common of women, both married and unmarried, who have defended their honour by taking the life of their assailant. One of these stories is so thrilling that I will endeavour to reproduce it in brief. A Kûrdish lady was returning, accompanied only by a manservant, to her husband's house from

1: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
MA11 Kurd MA11



a visit to her parents, who lived a day's journey off. On the road this man contrived so many delays that, instead of reaching home before sunset, they were obliged to stop for the night at a lonely and untenanted khan, of evil repute as the resort of robbers and brigands. After stabling the horses, the man came upstairs to the room occupied by his mistress, and approached her with dishonouring proposals. But she, divining his intention, had ready a small knife, which she plunged into his throat as he laid hold of her, and he fell dead. Not daring to close her eyes in that horrible place, she crouched in a corner to await the dawn. About midnight she was startled by hearing the sound of horse's hoofs approaching the khan—for who but a malefactor could arrive there in the dead of night? The newcomer alighted, and appeared to be seeking a stable for his horse, as he was leading it about below. "If he finds our horses," she thought, "I am lost," and again seizing the knife she cut off one of the dead man's arms and flung it from the window at the stranger as he passed below. He, however, still continued to wander backwards and forwards, leading his horse; so the next time he passed she cut off the other arm and threw that also at him. Upon this he cried, "Whosoever ye be, know that I am Dergo of Kisan,[1] and I fear ye not!" Oh, joy! It was her husband's voice.

"Dergo!" she called in reply, "It is I, thy Guzel, come and save me."

The astonished husband and his wife found their way to each other, and mutual explanations followed.

[1] A town between Bitlis and Van.

1: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
MA11 Kurd MA11



Not being sure of the day of his wife's return home, he had not been anxious at her non-arrival, but had been spending the evening with a party of friends. A question had arisen regarding his bravery; and, to vindicate it, he had accepted a wager to go alone at midnight to the Bas Khan, and leave there a token of his visit. He had been searching for a safe place in which to leave this token, unawed by the ghastly missiles hurled at him, as he supposed, by some banditti who had taken up their abode in the khan.

Mr. Rich, when travelling in Kûrdistan, met a girl of the Bulbassi tribe who had killed with a spear a Turk who insulted her. This young Amazon was dressed like a man, and served the chief, Fazullah Effendi, as his faithful henchman, accompanying him on all his expeditions. The women of this tribe are particularly hardy and intrepid. They sometimes take to the road as brigands, and unlucky is the trader or traveller who falls into their hands. For not content with robbing him, they strip him, excite him to make proposals to them, and then punish him for so doing with every species of mild torture which their lively imaginations can suggest, such as pinching, scratching, and scourging with thorns.

In the domestic circle the women are treated as equals by the men, who are most affectionate in their relations with their parents, sisters, and children, and in the character of husbands most considerate, kind, and forbearing. As an illustration of this latter trait, and at the same time of manners generally among the sedentary Kûrds, I cannot do better than give the following charming story.

for the Hutu themselves, safeguard had a more important application. If a man was a member of a group engaged in a razzia, and had to pass through dangerous territory, he could put himself under the protection of a neutral group whose man provided him with an escort and, should he be killed, was obligated to avenge his death just as if he had been one of its own. 484 579 629

Sanctuary is something of major importance among the Hutu. If a man had committed a crime, usually a murder, he could throw himself on the mercy of the nearest chieftain and the latter was bound by honor to protect him from his pursuers. Often the chieftain paid the indemnity or blood-money to the injured parties, although unrelated to them or to the criminal, as a generous gesture. Of greater interest, perhaps, the chieftain provided sanctuary for runaway lovers. If a youth and a maiden fell in love and their parents forbade the match, they sometimes fled together, and, if captured by their irate relatives, would be slain. It is said that the first thing for such fugitives to do is to have intercourse, so they cannot be separated except by death, for a woman who has lost her virginity out of wedlock must be killed by her kinsmen. If the pair were able to reach a chieftain, the latter now acted as a matchmaker. He sought out the parents of the girl, informed them that their daughter was under his protection, attempted to reconcile them to the marriage, by this time consummated, and often paid the dowry of the bride, again, as a matter 69% 628 622 [583] 628 584 622 [684]

of generosity. Commoners are not in a position to quarrel with a chieftain, and the problem was usually solved in this way. The youth was summoned and kissed the hand of his reluctant father-in-law, addressing him as a parent. If, however, the fugitive couple belonged to aristocratic houses, the most sanguine of vendettas could follow. 622 626 584

The integrity of its women is perhaps the primary asset of a family's honor. If a Kurd insults anything other than the women of his opponent, he is in danger of being slain himself. If, however, he seriously questions the honor of a woman, the latter must be killed by her relatives, never the accuser. The accusation is thus extremely dangerous, and, although it is sometimes heard in joking exchanges, a serious accusation cannot be taken lightly. The honor of a man depends very much on that of his female relatives, and the primary rule in this second regard is that no woman, unmarried or married, can have unseemly traffic, specifically intercourse, with any other person than her husband. If a bride cannot demonstrate her virginity, she can be returned to her relatives who are obligated to slay her, although she is not thus cast to them in every case. Similarly, if there is an accusation of adultery, a wife can be directed to the same fate. The woman, it might be said, is always the offender. It follows that if a woman errs in this way and is detected, she must flee, either to a chieftain or 577 562 554 [484] [585] 489 562

in the great cities, and even in these places she feels far from secure. While this concept is common to families of any class of society, it reaches its apogee among those of the aristocracy. If the daughter of a commoner runs away, he may be unable or unwilling to do anything about it, but a chieftain, as the personification of his people's honor, is more or less bound to exact justice. Thus insulting the integrity of a noblewoman can also result in violence. 684 562 628 683 622

Finally, hospitality is a necessary concomitant of a chieftain's honor, and an ideal of all. "To be a chieftain," it was said, "a man must belong to a noble house, must be followed by armed men, and must have a guest-room." Hence the aristocratic houses maintain diwankhaneg which vary considerably in size and form according to their estates. In some cases it is only a few rooms within the house and in others a separate building. Some chieftains have large tents pitched as guest-rooms in the summer. In furnishings and service the aristocratic guest-room does not differ from that described in the preceding section, and the distinction between it and the diwankhaneg of, say, a wealthy merchant, is that it must always be open to strangers, no matter what their station in life. Strictly speaking, the rule of hospitality applies to any Kurdish house, but, outside of emergencies, its usual application is among the aristocrats. One of the functional aspects of the support of the chieftainship appears here. A poor villager cannot entertain a stranger in sumptuous fashion, 574 622 [342] [343]

initial advance, and he must slap her or draw his knife with 585
a threatening gesture. This done, sometimes seriously,
the couple may retire to their bed.

The virginity of a maiden must be attested, and from the white undergarments and bedding the maid who makes up the room in the morning is able to report on her "virtue," for the only test is the blood of the hymen. Occasionally the youth will smear a handkerchief with this blood and present it to his mother. In either case, the mother kisses the girl on the forehead and praises her for her chastity. The stained handkerchief, accompanied by an expensive gift, may be sent to the mother of the girl. If no blood is in evidence, a suspicious husband can return [586] [627] [684]
the girl to her father's house, and her relatives are more or less obligated to kill her. If, however, the youth's father is "pious," he requests his son to pardon the girl and to say nothing. After the bride has remained for seven days, a delegation of women from her father's house escorts her to her old home for a visit of several days. Her husband comes to take her a second time, on this occasion with no ceremony, and exchanges gifts with his father-in-law at this meeting. The feasting and dances which accompany the wedding can endure for a week or more, but most townspeople consider two or three days sufficient. The marriages of the poor are conducted with less ostentation, although relatively high sums may be expended, and those of the Kurdish aristocracy with the greatest display, the slaughter of dozens of animals

4: Hansen E-5 (1957) 1961 MA11 Kurd MA11



Kurdish ornaments being replaced by imitation jewellery. With the bridal gown of white satin embroidered with sequins went a short, white bridal veil, diadem and bride's bouquet of white paper flowers. Thus bedecked she was placed in a clumsy wooden chair in the middle of the courtyard to be gazed at. The cars should have come at 5 p.m., but were delayed, which was felt as a great disgrace for the whole family. At last the narrow alley outside the house was filled with big cars. The one in which the bride was to be was decorated with a red ochre silk cloth on the radiator and silk bands of the same colour tied all round the body so that it looked like a chocolate box. As in the villages, red or reddish-yellow was considered auspicious.

The bride's mother then glided out of the picture and the bride started on her round accompanied by the family's midwife who was to return with the bridal sheet with the proof of the bride's virginity, which was expected before 10 p.m. that evening. All female guests present got into the other cars to follow the bride.

As opposed to the village weddings, where the bride was fetched from her home in the morning by men in cars paid by the bridegroom's family, in the educated milieu she was driven at 5.30 p.m. to the bridal house in a car escorted by women. All the cars were ordered and paid for by the bride's family. During the day the men had been in company with the bridegroom, leaving the house on the arrival of the bride. The women of the bride's home remained at the bridal house. Their presence in the courtyard and the loggia just outside the windows of the bridal chamber, caused the bridal couple to abandon it and to withdraw to the little store room on a bed made on the floor from the extra mattresses intended for sitting on in the loggia and for sleeping out on the roof.

In connection with the urban soiree wedding, a dinner was given a week later in the bride's parental home for the men of the two families, the bride's father being the host. The women of the house ostensibly cooked the food, but delivered it to the door of the guest room without entering. As soon as the eating was over the men left the house. The party went on as detached from the women as was technically possible in this urban home. On the same day the newly-married wife paid her first visit to her old home since the wedding, to take a bath and to receive a gift in the form of coins to hang on her necklace, in this case amounting to 42 Din—a kind of reward for having done her family honour. During her stay in her family home she wore a veil over her head in her father's presence. She was "shy", declared her sister. This was, then, a suggestion of an avoidance phenomenon in relation to the father on the part of the newly-married daughter.

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The assurance of virginity. As maintained by several quarters[19], the decisive feature about what, failing a better term, we call the 'wedding', that is to say the consummation of the marriage, is with the Turks, Arabs and Orientals in general the signs of virginity. "If she is not a virgin we must kill her", was my interpreter's laconic answer to my question about her sister, whom I saw sitting in the courtyard in a white European wedding dress. She does run the same risk as brides I had seen in the village, who would be killed if the accompanying woman did not return home this visible proofs of the bride's virginity. In answer to my question as to who in given circumstances would carry out the execution I was told: the brother, the father, the cousin. However, my interpreter added that before

4: Hansen E-5 (1957) 1961 MA11 Kurd MA11



831 the bride was punished for not having guarded the honour of the family—not by her injured hus-
684 band, but by men of her own family—she would be taken to be examined by the woman gynaecologist to discover whether the lacking proofs of virginity were due to some physical irregularity. It was stated that the metre of white cotton material that comprised the actual, detachable, bridal sheet would be kept by the bride's family for a year as proof for the bride's in-laws if any doubt should be raised about the bride's honour. "About a year" means to about the birth of the first child. After that the bride sheet would be washed and included in the household linen.

585 In view of the very definite modesty prevalent among Kurds, and the aversion to any display of
831 nakedness, the lack of modesty when it is a matter of first mating is quite unusually surprising. It is a public affair and must therefore be extremely embarrassing for the young woman; equally painful must it be for the young man who is expected immediately to consummate the marriage and then, his garments adjusted, to leave the field to the waiting woman, who roughly dries the bride's genital opening in order to obtain as clear a trace on the sheet as possible. I heard of no case where a named bride had been killed on her wedding morning.

183 Hay[154] states that with the Kurds the law is very strict as regards the honour of women, but it
592 seems to be the honour of married women that is concerned when he says that "a woman ... who
684 misconducts herself, or, who is suspected on reasonable grounds of misconducting herself, must
831 surely die; and the husband, brother or whoever is responsible for her, who fails to put her out of the way, is considered to have lost his honour, and a Kurd's *nâmûs* or honour is one of his most precious possessions". From what I was told it is only the young, unmarried girls whose honour is guarded by such drastic measures.

In regard to the bridal sheet custom, Nikitine[155] says that it was falling into desuetude as early as 1922, remarking that it is "à son déclin, une coutume consistant à mettre sur le lit des nouveaux mariés un linge blanc ("yyshk"), qu'on renvoie ensuite aux parents de la jeune femme, comme preuve de sa virginité".

585 The use of the bridal sheet with the Iranian Lurs is mentioned by Fellberg[156]. That the Arabs kill
831 a young woman who does not pass the test, and that this is done by her own male relatives, is referred
191 to by Dickson[157], though he adds that he has heard of one case where "... the man being chivalrous enough to smuggle into the bridal chamber a fresh piece of meat with blood on it, with which to soil the bed linen ...". To this can be put Niebuhr's information about the Arabs as long ago as 1763: that it is seldom that the unfortunate bride suffers, "denn sie wissen Künste"[158].

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595 *Polygamy and divorce.* According to the Coran, provided a man's economic position allows it he may have up to four wives at a time[159], but is obliged to treat them alike and spend an equal amount of time, day and night, with each of them[160].

586 The husband has sole right to an immediate dissolution of the marriage by pronouncing *talâq*:
587 "I renounce thee" or, better: "I abandon all right over thee". Until the expiration of the 'idda-period[161] the wife cannot contract a new marriage, and during this term she is entitled to maintenance[162]. By *talâq* a man can twice divorce himself from his wife but, should he regret his act, can without further

578 628 • 684 681 lead to one side burning the other's crops or stealing their cattle. Until bloodshed has occurred nothing is serious and a good elder Agha will see to it that the parties submit to arbitration before the affair reaches a crisis. More serious are affairs in which women are involved; an insult to honour can only be wiped out by death and the discovery of adultery can have only one possible sequel. Such cases however need not necessarily lead to feud; if the guilty lover belongs to the same village as the injured husband a single murder is considered to settle the matter. If the parties are from different groups however the affair is much more serious and several assassinations may take place before settlement can be reached. Eventually, provided it is the honour of commoners rather than of Aghas that is at stake, the Aghas concerned will arrange feal through the mediation of the tribal chiefs. According to Hay "A blood feud is usually settled by the payment of blood-money; every condition of man or woman has his or her price, and even the parts of the body are catalogued. A Hurmanji or middle class Kurdish farmer is valued at £90, one of his women at £45, and his leg or arm at say £20. Such payment is often made in kind, some cattle or a horse, or so much wheat being handed over to the aggrieved party. It is very common for a girl to be given away in marriage in payment of blood money. Thus if £90 were owing, the price of the blood of one m n the debt might be paid by the delivery of one girl, three cows and a donkey". I have no comparable information, though I think the general principle is accurately described. In Hay's time the Government could seldom apprehend a murderer. He says "For the murdered man's relations to take their revenge is quite in order, but an execution at the hands of that monster, the Government, is an entirely different matter. The culprit therefore is carefully concealed until he can make good his escape to the hills". The position today is somewhat different and I fancy the murderer is usually caught. This however does not end the feud; blood feud murders are punishable only by two years imprisonment and the war starts again when the culprit gets free.*

628 As has been explained the feuds of commoners and the less important Aghas are settled in the end by tribal arbitration. Moreover

* The Administration makes a distinction between feud murders justified by tribal custom and ordinary murders which are not. The former come under a special code for which the maximum penalty is two years imprisonment; the latter come under the ordinary Iraq criminal code for which the penalty is much more severe (? death). This has had an interesting repercussion. In the old days by tribal custom an affair of honour was adequately settled if the man only was killed, the woman in the case being merely driven out of her own community to find for herself. Today it is necessary for the avenging husband to prove to the Authorities that it is really an affair of honour and not just a cold blooded murder. The custom now therefore is to kill both the guilty parties.

628 684 178